Trustees' View

Nixon Library Is in Trouble

Los Angeles

Eight trustees of the Richard Nixon Foundation have recommended that the foundation be dissolved and that its assets be turned over to Whittier College, the Los Angeles Times has learned.

Those supporting the recommendation believe there is now little chance the foundation can achieve its original goal--creation of a Nixon library and museum.

The trustees calling for dissolution are Leonard Firestone, president; Jack Drown, treasurer; Patricia Reilly Hitt, vice chairman of the board of executive trustees, and trustees Earl Adams, Robert Finch, Clinton Harris, Hubert Perry and Taft Schreifer.

To close out foundation operations, at least 13 members of the 25-member board must agree.

Mrs. Hitt proposed dissolving the foundation last week in a letter she wrote to foundation trustees. Mrs. Hitt, of Laguna Beach, served in the Nixon administration as an assistant secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Mrs. Hitt outlined the original mission of the nonprofit foundation as "undertaking the creation and perpetuation of a presidential library and museum for the collection and study of papers and memorabilia of the 37th President of the United States."

But she said, "the prospects for being able to carry out that mission in the foreseeable future are unfortunately clouded at this time."

She said the foundation has not engaged in fundraising, nor selected a site nor adopted a design or concept for such a library and museum.

The foundation, which Mrs. Hitt said "has been in a quiescent state for a considerable period of time," requires funds for studies, surveys, supplies, office space, equipment, travel expenses and advisory services to the oral history project conducted from 1971 to 1973 by Whittier College in California.

As a result, the foundation's assets consist only of materials and studies developed by the oral history project and a few other items, such as furniture, files and records.

When Mr. Nixon was pardoned, President Ford also ordered that the former President would retain custody of his White House tape recordings and documents. However, Congress overturned the arrangement, voting to keep the records under government control. The courts are to make a final determination on the ultimate ownership of the documents.

The oral history consists of interviews with relatives and longtime friends of the former President and is understood to cover the first 30 years of his life. None of the assets of the foundation, includes materials from the Nixon presidency.

At a Whittier College trustees meeting on December 2, a resolution was adopted to indicate the willingness of the college to accept and administer the foundation assets.

UPI Telephoto

PATRICIA REILEY HITT

A leading trustee

Four members of the Nixon Fundarion board also serve as trustees of the college. They are Mrs. Hitt, Harris, Perry and Donald M. Kendall.

Three foundation trustees are on trial in Washington for matters relating to the Watergate coverup. They are John D. Erlichman, H. R. Haldeman and John N. Mitchell. A fourth, Herbert W. Kalmbach, is serving a sentence at the Federal Correctional Institution at Lompoc for collecting illegal campaign contributions.

Other trustees include Mr Nixon's son-in-law, David Eisenhower; brothers Edward and F. Donald Nixon, evangelist Billy Graham and Dallas millionaire H. Ross Perot.

Technically, Mr. Nixon has no legal role in deciding the future of the foundation, but the Times has learned that the former President has been consulted and has expressed no objection to dissolving the foundation.

Those closely associated with the foundation made it clear that a move to dissolve the foundation would not have been made if Mr. Nixon had objected.

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